Culture, Theory and Critique

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rctc20

# Language games with ‘Manifesto’

Nana Ariel

**To cite this article:** Nana Ariel (2021): Language games with ‘Manifesto’, Culture, Theory and Critique, DOI: 10.1080/14735784.2021.1984970

**To link to this article:** https://doi.org/10.1080/14735784.2021.1984970

Published online: 25 Nov 2021.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 4

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at
https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=rctc20

CULTURE, THEORY AND CRITIQUE
https://doi.org/10.1080/14735784.2021.1984970

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

# Language games with 'Manifesto'

Nana Ariel

Humanities, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel

**ABSTRACT**

What happens when 'manifesto', as the emblem of a committed artistic or political action, is used as the title of consumer products such as perfume? What do critics mean when they say that a certain work is 'a manifesto' rather than literature? When does this label appear as a superlative, and when, in contrast, is it a form of denunciation? What does J. L. Austin mean when he wishes, in the conclusion of 'How to Do Things with Words', that his work is not seen as 'an individual manifesto'? The variations of the word 'manifesto' in popular discourse are one of the things that makes the manifesto, as Luca Somigli asserts, 'notoriously so difficult to define'. Following Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of 'language game' and the rich scholarly literature on the manifesto genre, this essay offers a reflection on 'manifesto' as a multilayered, performative concept which enables multiple cultural agents to perform various discursive actions. Examining its contemporary pragmatic and rhetorical meaning in light of its history helps in understanding how the term 'manifesto' is actually manifested.

**KEYWORDS**

Manifestos; language games; rhetoric; pragmatics; modernism

> Now what do the words of this language *signify?* – What is supposed to shew what they signify, if not the kind of use they have?
>
> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 6

Manifestos can be fierce, combative, contrarian, playful, arrogant, exhausting, inventive, cheeky and marvelously designed, but one would rarely think of their smell. The fragrance called 'Manifesto' by the Yves St. Laurent fashion house, however, presents a challenge to this premise. Indeed, one would not expect to find decisive declarations or a programmatic vision in a perfume – it is an object, not even a text, and the use of the title 'manifesto' is nothing more than a vague pastiche. But it is not alone: Martin Puchner describes his surprising encounter with Isabella Rossellini's 'Manifesto' – an ad for a line of cosmetics which invites customers to 'write your own manifesto', arousing Puchner's thoughts about the history of manifestos as we know them (2006: 241). Consumer products, restaurants, rock bands (*Streetlight Manifesto*, *The Redneck Manifesto*), and many more, embrace the title 'manifesto' and enjoy its aura.

For anyone familiar with the history of the genre, these uses of the term 'manifesto' can easily be seen as obscene abuses. If the Communist Manifesto is the historical

**CONTACT** Nana Ariel nana.ariel@gmail.com
© 2021 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

emblem, the late-capitalist pastiches which boldly appropriate the term for individualist consumer-market purposes, are tarnished by sordid irony. As in the case of many other political terms such as 'democracy' and 'justice', the term 'manifesto' is often blurred and used in vague forms, against which George Orwell protested in his seminal essay 'Politics and the English Language' (1946). However, 'manifesto' as a term and a genre have always enjoyed rhetorical fluidity, which makes it 'notoriously so difficult to define', as Luca Somigli rightfully asserted (2003: 23). From a pragmatic and rhetorical point of view, instead of sticking to a rigid definition and determining what 'manifesto' ultimately is or is not, it is no less interesting to explore its elusiveness and the ways multiple cultural agents use it to perform actions in discourse, for various purposes. Often 'manifesto' functions as a sort of magic word, charged with historical connotations accumulated and formed during the genre's history, which is used today (albeit vaguely indeed) to convey various meanings.

## Manifestations of 'manifesto'

The denotative meaning of the word 'manifesto' has changed over time and some of its modern meanings differ from its pre-modern ones. In fact, one might say that the fragrance titled 'manifesto' is more compatible with the original definition of the term than the Communist Manifesto. 'Manifesto' is derived from the Latin word manifestus, which consists of the words 'manus' (hand) and 'festus' (from the root fendere, based on de-fendere or of-fendere), meaning in combination, 'can be taken by hand'. Manifesto, then, originally means a factual piece, something having an evident materiality that can be touched, something literally palpable (OED). The word 'manifesto' is also related to the adjective 'manifest' – something visible, exposed – 'revealed to the eye, mind or judgment […] obvious' (OED).

Indeed, in the sixteenth century the word 'manifeste' in French was used to denote physical evidence presented in the court of law, indicating a proof – a solid and unshakable evidence. This meaning of the word as a palpable entity resonates in the still-used sense of 'manifesto' as a list of the cargo of a ship, train or airplane; that is, a declaration before a sovereign authority (tax or customs authorities) of something that has an indisputable material existence (OED). 'Divine manifestation' also resonates with this meaning of manifesto as a concrete entity and a proof.

This pre-modern meaning of manifesto as an authoritative revelation of something definite and inarguable presents, in a way, the opposite of its modern one. In its modern sense of an action in the public sphere, the word 'manifesto' still bears the connotation of revelation and exposure; however, it is the exposure of a polemical world view to the eyes of all in a public, demonstrative text, bearing collective significance. The word 'manifesto' has thus shifted from a fact that can be literally 'taken by hand' to a demonstrative public text that metaphorically 'takes (something) into the hands' (takes public responsibility):

> A public declaration or proclamation, written or spoken; *esp.* a printed declaration, explanation, or justification of policy issued by a head of state, government, or political party or candidate, or any other individual or body of individuals of public relevance, as a school or movement in the Arts. (OED)

Even the modern sense of the term, however, is elusive and unstable. The manifesto has been formed as a genre that does not respond to fixed writing norms and which draws characteristics from various rhetorical worlds (Abastado, in 1980, was one of the first to discuss the validity of the manifesto as a genre and a research object due to its extreme versatility). It is indeed a genre, characterised by an array of conventions and clichés and evoking a typical horizon of expectations – but a highly dynamic and fluid one. Manifestos contain characteristics of varied 'discourse families' (Yanoshevsky 2009: 263), applied dynamically and in hybrid forms, including typical characteristics of political, programmatic, utopian and theoretical writing; Aesthetic characteristics from visual art, poetry, prose and drama (Perloff 2003, Puchner 2006); and rhetorical characteristics from the world of advertising and public relations such as framing and marketing strategies. The manifesto as a genre thus overlaps and touches on many other genres including pamphlet (Angenot 1982), appeal, petition, open letter, treaty, essay, utopia and advertisement – and the boundaries between them are flexible.

The distinction regarding the elusive nature of the genre has led to a broad critical consensus that certain texts are perceived as manifestos even if they do not declare themselves as such, as long as they are seen and behave as such (Yanoshevsky 2009: 265). Thus, the question of definition and form ('what a manifesto is') and the search for a fixed genre structure have been replaced by a functional and pragmatic approach ('what manifestos do'). This transition from the perception of the manifesto as a stable object to its perception as a dynamic performative structure has made it possible to explore as manifestos a variety of texts as well as non-textual products, including those that do not bear the title 'manifesto' but display manifestary characteristics, including literature and art works, catalogues, interviews and introductions (Gleize 1980, Blodgett & Purdy 1990, Millot 1996, Dumasy & Massol 2001).

Even the question of what manifestary characteristics are or how a manifesto 'behaves', however, has no simple answer. Prominent manifesto anthologies, such as the one edited by Mary Ann Caws (2001), contain radically different texts (among them Guillaume Apollinaire's calligraphies, Stephen Mallarme's concrete-poem, and Oscar Wilde's Introduction to 'The Picture of Dorian Gray'). Not only do these texts not bear the title 'Manifesto', they also do not have any of the typical characteristics associated with the genre, such as declarations, call for action or a list of principles or demands; it is, in fact, difficult to find any similarities between them. The texts in this collection were chosen for inclusion due to diverse implicit criteria: some are well-known texts that have become established over time as representing a cultural trend, a group, a movement or an ideology; some are texts that are not defined as manifestos but were written by an author known for his manifesto writing; some were written in conflicting and charged political or cultural contexts, which encourage the reading of texts written in their framework as manifestos, and only some of them have typical manifestary features.[1]

[1]In a conversation I had with the editor in April 2012, when I asked her what her criteria were for choosing texts for the anthology, she said that she just chose texts she liked. Indeed, personal preferences of thinkers and authority figures also have a significant effect on the inclusion of texts in genre frameworks or their exclusion from these frameworks. Other anthologies such as Danchev (2011) and MacKenzie (2014) demonstrate the same diversity and elusiveness of the genre.

Conceptualisation of a text as a manifesto, therefore, does not require the identification of inherent textual characteristics, but depends mainly on context. As Caws writes in the preface to her anthology (2001: xxviii), 'The manifesto can always be redefined; it makes its own definition each time.' The manifesto is defined ad-hoc, and may be conceptualised simultaneously under different conceptual frameworks. The study of the manifesto, therefore, ranges from attempts to delimit the scope of the genre, to a constant desire to expand its boundaries, emphasising the dependence of the definition of a manifesto on the context: its background, its interaction with other texts and genres, and its reception. Some manifestos are pre-defined as such by their creators, while many others are conceptualised as such in retrospect following the identification of a particular combination of characteristics or their function in the field in which they operate and their impact on it. According to Yanoshevsky (2009: 273), 'academic and journalistic criticism plays a prominent role in establishing a manifesto as such.' That is, labelling a text as a manifesto is often the product of interpretive preferences and editorial or scholarly interests. Indeed, prominent texts such as the Symbolist Manifesto and the Futurist Manifesto were published in some of their early versions without the title 'manifesto', and received this title simultaneously in editorial remarks. The unique moment at the turn of the twentieth century, in which 'isms' flourished and ideological devotion was in fashion, made the manifesto the typical genre of modernism and a successful branding choice.

Moreover, as mentioned, the popular use of the word 'manifesto' expands and stretches the definition of the term and makes it broadly applicable. In public discourse, the use of the word is widespread not only to describe 'a public declaration or proclamation, written or spoken' as the dictionary definition asserts, but also to describe actions such as demonstrative dress and behaviour, institutions and brands. As Puchner reminds us, the commercial borrowing of the term should not come as a surprise if we remember that the historical manifesto was always closely related to the world of advertising (2006: 243). Indeed, no less than it represents the history of communism, the manifesto genre represents a history of capitalism.

In this context, it is worth remembering that the collectivity identified with the manifesto is in most cases a discursive fantasy. Even when the manifesto speaks in the plural, as if representing a 'we', it is often issued by few, even by one, and the plural talk conceals various discursive and social interests. The imaginative 'we' is a linguistic pattern implying an already-approved knowledge, and it is thus a form of interpellation, a 'colonizing' structure (Lyon 1999: 26), involving illusions of inclusion. Thus, modern texts such as the Communist Manifesto created a collectivist discourse while often written by the privileged few, addressing a collective that has not yet been formed. The common expectation from manifestos to represent a collective rather than individuals, therefore, reflects the expectation of a realisation of a particular rhetorical, manifestary convention. This notion continues to reduce the gap between collectivist declarations and consumer products carrying the title 'manifesto'; both use this title as a performative action in discourse.

These etymological, historical and discursive journeys of the term 'manifesto' demonstrate its dynamism. It is open to various performances and is subject to a multiplicity of 'language games' in Ludwig Wittgenstein's terms, in his *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). The term 'language-game', he writes, 'is meant to bring into prominence the

fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life' (1963: 11), that is, words change their sense in specific use cases when they are practised in specific contexts. To Wittgenstein and his followers, the existence of a word as a supposedly fixed entity independent of specific use is senseless – it only reflects a moment of institutional stabilisation of meaning, but not the actual manifestation of a word in discourse. This is particularly evident in the case of 'manifesto': not only is it borrowed to signify a wide range of phenomena but also, as I will demonstrate, this title is used to produce different and often contradictory meanings.

## 'Manifesto' as a superlative, 'manifesto' as criticism

What language games are enacted with 'manifesto' today? What do people try to perform when they use this word? Two prominent cases of opposing uses can be clearly identified – one treats 'manifesto' as a superlative, and the other treats it as a form of criticism. Both carry a distinct relation to the denotative meaning of the word and to the history of the genre.

In most cases, the term 'manifesto' is used as a superlative. It marks something as having public importance, or often more vaguely, as Somigli mentions (2003: 24), as 'making a statement'. This use resonates with the denotative meaning of 'manifesto' mentioned earlier, as: 'A public declaration or proclamation […] *of public relevance*' (my emphasis). This was exactly the motivation to eventually prefer the framing 'manifesto' for a text such as 'Le Futurisme', which was published in *Le Figaro* in 1909 without this title. 'Manifesto' intensifies the prestige of a publication and gives it an aura of importance and public relevance. True, notwithstanding its shocking aesthetic innovativeness, the first Futurist manifesto carried some already conventional manifestary qualities such as a list of principles and proclamations peppered with exclamation points. In many other use cases, the term 'manifesto' is not given to a text that has any identifiable manifestary qualities such as explicit declarations or a call for action, or even the slightest hint of ideological devotion or programmatic vision, but rather the very labelling as a manifesto makes the text into one.

When this title is given to a consumer product like a perfume, it in fact uses an intriguing logical fallacy which is quite common in the world of advertising: instead of identifying something as having public importance and therefore calling it a manifesto, the advertisement calls something a manifesto even if it has no manifestary characteristics, and therefore implies that it bears the aura of public importance. In one of the Isabella Rossellini advertisements for the fragrance Manifesto from 2002, this reverse receives a striking visual manifestation: a long paper scroll appears there, as if produced by the mere words of a model (Rossellini herself), who is situated near the perfume, smilingly calling out her message. The title 'manifesto' thus seems to merge with the fragrance and produce a declarative text. The slogan 'un hommage à ce que vous êtes' (a tribute to who you are), and in other ads 'live your own' and 'write your own manifesto', implies that this is a feminist declaration of independence and self-confidence, vague as it may be. Rossellini's entire cosmetics campaign, which included women of various ages and beauty ideals (such as a smiling young woman with braces on her teeth), uses the title 'manifesto' to imply that what it does is 'more than just cosmetics' – it is a significant action in the public sphere, blurring the capitalist, individualist connotations of a cosmetics line, and granting it collective, political meanings.

Indeed, the language games that use 'manifesto' as a superlative are intended to extend the supposed boundaries of a text, object or any given phenomenon, and imply that it is more than what it is, broader and for a higher cause than what it seems: 'more than just a … '. It is a way to mark something as bearing importance, and in most cases a socio-political one. Giving this title recruits the historical collectivist connotation of 'manifesto' in order to take things out of the realm of the individual and imply their collectivity and representativeness. This language game's hidden, utterly Aristotelian premise, is that what is collective is inherently better than what is individual; what is relevant for many counts more than what is relevant for a few.

This language game is particularly common in art and literary criticism, which wishes to control the reception of a work, reframe it, reinterpret it, and provide new critical tools for understanding it. Thus, Yanoshevsky (2006) has demonstrated that works by Nathalie Sarraute and Alain Robbe-Grillet that are not self-declared manifestos, were perceived and conceptualised as the manifestos of the Nouveau Roman, in order to establish it as a literary wave in the 1950s.

In contemporary criticism, assertions such as the following are common:

> 'Infinite Jest,' a 1,079-page literary manifesto that was also a piercingly funny, inventive, and deeply moving novel about tennis, film theory, Alcoholics Anonymous, Québécois separatism, and differential calculus, made him [David Foster Wallace] a cause célèbre when it was published, in 1996, and spawned whole schools of fiction writers eager to emulate his dense, footnote-and-endnote-riddled, riffing, colloquial style. (*The New Yorker*, Deborah Treisman 2008)

*Infinite Jest*, the critic implies, is not just a novel, it is more than that. It represents a generation, a style and a new language. 'Manifesto' is presented here as the central classification of the text, one that grants it further importance than what it actually happens to be – a novel. The title of another article: 'A Manifesto Against Failures of Understanding: Ian McEwan's *Atonement*' (Ionescu 2017), implies the same. The novel is not merely a novel – it is a statement; a declaration that bears a sense of collectivity.

Not only does this common language game present a superlative; it also reflects a tension, and even a certain rivalry between manifesto and aesthetics. It implies that a novel or a work of art per se lacks public significance and that in order to be publicly influential, a work should not be measured only by aesthetic criteria, but also by additional ones, which are attributed to manifestos. These implied criteria seem to include the extent to which the work represents, or may be seen as representing, a general cultural tendency, a generation or a cultural wave, and the extent to which it is related to the social and political world and can be seen as a public declaration.

This rivalry is more evident, taking a different turn, in another common language game with 'manifesto' – this time a critical one. Here, 'manifesto' is used to criticise art or literary works which are too explicit, too declarative, often too obvious. These uses still emphasise a rivalry between art and manifesto, but they tackle the term 'manifesto' from a different angle, and resonate with the adjective 'manifest': 'Clearly revealed to the eye, mind, or judgement […] obvious'. A manifesto, as opposed to art, is seen as an explicit text, lacking subtext, and thus a work of art described as a manifesto lacks artistic sophistication and subtlety and is portrayed as *merely* a declarative or programmatic treatise.

Thus, Kary Waldman (*New Yorker*, March 2020) asserts that 'Rebecca Solnit's memoir is much more than a feminist manifesto'. To be a worthy literary work here, a text should be 'more than' a manifesto. 'Manifesto' in that sense is seen as a narrow and limited work compared with literature. In evident contrast to the previous language game, 'manifesto' implies that something is 'less than' rather than 'more than'.

Writer Arundhati Roy (*The Guardian*, May 2019) says: 'I wanted to write a novel. A novel that could only be a novel – not a novel that really wanted to be […] a manifesto, or sociological treatise of some kind'. In an interview (*The Guardian*, Lewis, June 2018), she adds:

> I don't think that *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* should be viewed as a manifesto, that it's proposing an alternative way of living. It's a story about certain particular and unique people who find their way in a unique way. By having these people, you are shining a light on what society is really like and the fact that you can't ignore caste and gender and all of that. It's really about that.

Roy implies a sharp distinction between manifesto and literature and rejects the framing of her work as a manifesto. 'Manifesto' here has ultimately the same meaning as it has in the first language game – it is something that has evident socio-political implications and public importance. However, as a speech act, 'manifesto' performs a different action; it does not grant literature broader public validity but rather tries to differentiate and crystalise literature's role as the reflection of human experiences, separate from pragmatic actions.

Both language games – 'manifesto' as a superlative and 'manifesto' as criticism – thus reflect a tension between aesthetics and politics, art and manifesto. This rivalry, which has always characterised the relation of artists and critics to manifestos (Puchner 2006: 75), is also surprising considering the history of the genre: starting with the Communist Manifesto and climaxing with historical modernism and avant-garde, manifestos often blurred the boundaries between manifesto and art, creating hybrid 'manifesto-art' (Puchner 2006: 6), in which aesthetic and programmatic qualities are inseparable. In addition, the boundaries between political and literary manifestos are often extremely fuzzy. It seems, though, that in the Western collective cultural memory, 'manifesto' is established as a political work sharply separated from aesthetics. In the case of the first language game (superlative), this connotation grants works of art enhanced public importance. It links them to the political and cultural history of the genre, and creates a connotation of affinity with previous manifestos, as if granting them another layer of meaning without implying a flaw in their aesthetics. In the case of the second language game (criticism), the connotation of 'manifesto' seems to question a work's validity as worthy art.

In all these cases, the title 'manifesto' cannot be seen as a descriptive label but rather as a formative and performative action that actively shapes its subject. Not only does the action of naming something a manifesto dictate how its subject will be perceived and interpreted, it also influences the identity of the interpreter – the one who has the power to grant a phenomenon a new frame of meaning. Yanoshevsky (2009: 276) stresses this reciprocal influence between manifesto and criticism:

> The manifesto appeals to critics because it is halfway between self-identification and knowledge: the critics recognize themselves in it, since they are after all the ones who 'gave the baby its name,' but at the same time they must suspect it for its rhetoric and apply to it their critical faculties.

Therefore, as well as creating language games, using the term 'manifesto' also constitutes the identity of the players. In this context, I would like to refer to another language game surprisingly performed by none other than one of the central figures of manifesto-scholarship and an (often denied) successor of late Wittgenstein – J. L. Austin.

## How to do things with 'manifesto'

Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (1962) has become a manifesto-research necessity; his work was the first to comprehensively deal with the performative force of language and specifically with 'illocutionary utterances' such as proclamations – a typical feature of manifesto writing. Manifestos, which often strive to diminish the gap between words and deeds, seem to present a showcase of possible speech acts (Demers & McMurray 1986). Austin's perception influenced the understanding of manifesto-writing in performative terms, even in works that placed his insights under scrutiny. Puchner (2006: 24–6), following Pierre Bourdieu's criticism of Austin, stresses that the manifesto subverts the authority required to complete 'happy' performative utterances in Austin's terms. A manifesto in its current meaning is rarely something that an authority such as 'a head of state' would use, despite the dictionary's assertion. The issuers of manifesto, who usually lack any initial authority that allows them to actually do things

with words, use theatrical authority and construct a context in which they will be perceived as qualified to act.

So far, though, I have turned away from the discussion on manifestos' performative force or lack of it, to discuss the performative force of the term 'manifesto' itself. Just like Austin's typical examples of naming as performing an action ('I name this ship the *Queen Elizabeth*') (1962: 5), using the title 'manifesto' is not descriptive or constative but rather performative – it acts within discourse to immediately change the perception of the phenomenon it refers to. In this context, Puchner noticed another interesting fact: Austin himself uses the term 'manifesto' at the end of his collected lectures, and following Puchner, I wish to point out Austin's own language game with 'manifesto'. In the last sentences of the book, using his typical dry humour, Austin jokes about his thesis on performatives such as complaints, wishes and proclamations, by positioning his own speech within this field:

> In these lectures, then, I have been doing two things which I do not altogether like doing:
>
> 1. Producing a programme, that is, saying what ought to be done rather than doing something;
> 2. Lecturing.
>
> However, as against (1), I should very much like to think that I have been sorting out a bit the way things have already begun to go and are going with increasing momentum in some parts of philosophy, *rather than proclaiming an individual manifesto*. And as against (2), I should certainly like to say that nowhere could, to me, be a nicer place to lecture in than Harvard (1962: 163, my emphasis).

Austin wishes that in his work he was representing a philosophical trend rather than 'proclaiming an individual manifesto'. Puchner (2006: 24) interprets this assertion as the reflection of Austin's implicit rivalry with the manifesto genre. He understands it as Austin's implicit acknowledgment of the theatrical nature of manifestos, as opposed to his own theory which requires utterances to be 'serious' rather than theatrical in order to work.

From another perspective, Austin's performance of 'manifesto' is quite original. It deviates from the typical language game in which 'manifesto' is a superlative marking something as 'more than what it is', but it also turns away from 'manifesto' as a criticism. Rather, it seems that Austin succeeds in merging both meanings and presents his work as both 'manifesto' and 'not manifesto', depending on the interpreter. His wish ('I should very much like think that I have been sorting out a bit the way things have already begun to go […] in some parts of philosophy') creates the impression that representing a philosophical wave is preferable to 'proclaiming an individual manifesto'. However, at the same time, this wish can be seen as a rhetoric of modesty which conceals his actual passion for proclaiming such a pioneering manifesto – after all, while complaining that he did not like to do it, he does admit that he was 'producing a program, that is, saying what ought to be done'. Thus, he resonates with the most emblematic manifesto writer in history – Karl Marx – whose eleventh Feuerbach thesis (1888) advises philosophers not just to interpret the world, but rather to start changing it. In these closing sentences which create an implicit affinity between himself as a philosopher, and Marx as a philosopher as well as a prominent manifesto writer, Austin does things with 'manifesto': he

presents an open and sophisticated language game and even positions himself within the history of the genre.

Austin's last remark reminds us that scholars also tend to play with 'manifesto' in relation to scholarly work, and gain from its effect as a transformative magic word. When we want to crown an academic text as having public importance, to say that it is not merely a study, not just research, not only science – but 'more than that' – we say it is a manifesto. When Donna Haraway wished to break the barriers of academic writing and present a scholarly hybrid of essay, prose and a political treatise in 1985, she gave it the title 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs'. But on other occasions, when we want to stress that a study is not scientific enough, perhaps not academically responsible enough, we say: this is not a study – it's a manifesto! Indeed, language games with 'manifesto' are a prevalent critical speech act, not only in marketing and literary criticism but also within academic discourse.

The abundant uses of the term are surprising considering the fact that throughout the twentieth century the manifesto genre was eulogised, along with declarations on the death of modernism, ideology and history. 'How to write a manifesto', Rem Koolhaas asked at the beginning of *Delirious New York* (1978) 'in an age disgusted with them?' (1994: 9). However, studies in the last few decades, which this one joins, have shown not only the flourishing of the genre in contemporary culture in old and new forms and formats, but also the salience of 'manifesto' as a meaningful term in cultural discourse. One might say that the language games depicted here are merely relics that underscore the genre's irrelevance – after all, no one actually thinks that manifestos are fragrant. However, those abundant language games with 'manifesto' manage to work precisely because of the dominant baggage of cultural and historical connotations that the word 'manifesto' still carries.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Notes on contributor

*Dr. Nana Ariel* is a lecturer and researcher in the Faculty of Humanities at Tel Aviv University, in the fields of rhetoric, cultural studies and the science of learning. Previously she was a Fulbright visiting scholar at Harvard University. Her book *Manifestos: Restless Writings on the Brink of the 21st Century*, is the first full research book in Hebrew about the manifesto genre. Her articles have appeared in various journals and in international magazines such as *Aeon*. She is involved in initiatives that promote adventurous pedagogy in the Humanities.

## References

Abastado, C. 1980. 'Introduction à l'analyse des manifestes'. *Littérature* 39, 39–46.
Angenot, M. 1982. *La parole pamphlétaire*. Paris: Payot.
Austin, J. L. 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Blodgett, E. D. and Purdy, A. G. (eds). 1990. *Préfaces et manifestes littéraires/Prefaces and Literary Manifestoes*. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Research Institute for Comparative Literature.
Caws, M. A. 2001. *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Danchev, A. 2011. *100 Artists' Manifestos: From the Futurists to the Stuckists*. London: Penguin Books.
Demers, J. and McMurray, M. 1986. *L'enjeu du manifeste, le manifeste en jeu*. Québec: Le Préambule.
Dumasy, L. and Massol, M. (eds). 2001. *Pamphlet, utopie, manifeste XIXe–XXe siècles*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
Gleize, J. M. 1980. 'Manifestes, préfaces – sur quelques aspects du prescriptif'. *Littérature* 39:3, 12–16.
Haraway, D. 1985. 'Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s'. *Socialist Review* 80, 65–108.
Ionescu, A. 2017. 'A Manifesto Against Failures of Understanding: Ian McEwan's Atonement'. *Critique – Bolingbroke Society* 58:5, 600–18.
Koolhaas, R. 1994. *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*. New York: Monacelli Press.
Lewis, Tim. 2018. Arundhati Roy: 'The point of the writer is to be unpopular', *The Guardian*, 17 June. Available online at https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jun/17/arundhati-roy-interview-you-ask-the-questions-the-point-of-the-writer-is-to-be-unpopular.
Lyon, Janet. 1999. *Manifestos: Provocations of the Modern*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
'Manifesto', 'manifest'. 1989. *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press
MacKenzie, Scott. (ed). 2014. *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Marx, Carl 1888. 'Karl Marx über Feuerbach von Jahre 1845'. In: Engels, Frederick. *Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der Klassischen deutschen Philosophie*. Berlin: Verlag von J. H. W. Dietz, 69–72.
Millot, H. 1996. 'Arts poétiques, préfaces et manifestes: la légitimation de l'écriture par le savoir au XIXe siècle'. In A. Vaillant (ed). *Ecriture/Savoir: littérature et connaissance à l'époque modern*. Saint-Etienne, France: Printer, 205–27.
Orwell, G. 1946. 'Politics and the English Language'. *Horizon* 13:76, 252–65.
Perloff, M. 2003. *The Futurist Moment*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
Puchner, M. 2006. *Poetry of the Revolution: Marx, Manifestos, and the Avant-Gardes*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Roy, Arundhati. 2019. 'Literature provides shelter. That's why we need it', *The Guardian*, May 13. Available online at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/13/arundhati-roy-literature-shelter-pen-america.
Somigli, Luca. 2003. *Legitimizing the Artist: Manifesto Writing and European Modernism, 1885–1915*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
Treisman, D. 2008. 'David Foster Wallace', *The New Yorker,* September 17. Available online at https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/09/29/david-foster-wallace.
Waldman, K. 2020. 'Rebecca Solnit's Memoir Is Much More Than a Feminist Manifesto,' *The New Yorker*, March 11. Available online at https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/rebecca-solnits-memoir-is-much-more-than-a-feminist-manifesto.
Wittgenstein, L. 1963. *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by G. E. M. Anscombe. Oxford: Blackwell.
Yanoshevsky, G. 2006. *Les discours du nouveau roman, essais, entretiens, débats: le cas de Nathalie Sarrute et d'Alain Robbe-Grillet*. Lille: Presses universitaires du Septentrion.
Yanoshevsky, G. 2009. 'Three Decades of Writing on Manifesto: The Making of a Genre'. *Poetics Today* 30:2, 257–86.